

Hereford Heckler

Independent anarchist news and views

FREEDOM, EQUALITY, COMMUNITY • #21 • MARCH 2012



FREE!

Cut-out-and-keep
Jesse Norman
voodoo doll

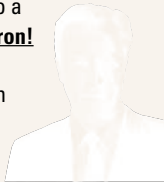
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HOMELESS HOSTEL CLOSED BY CAMERON

'We're all in it together' ... apparently. Yet none of us can see David Cameron and all his rich mates losing their homes. Which is precisely what's happened to eight people in Hereford after the city's only homeless hostel for men closed its doors at the end of February.

Cuts in housing benefit grants have meant Hope Scott House, on Roman Road, is now unable to cover the costs of the project, pushing already homeless men into a state of absolute destitution. **This is what your cuts are doing, David Cameron!**

It costs around £50,000 a year to keep the hostel open. Perhaps our millionaire MP, Jesse 'I live in a massive house in leafy Broomy Hill' Norman will put his hands in his pockets and show just how much he really cares about the people of Hereford!



Guillotine not included

EXCLUSIVE

'EVERYTHING MUST GO!'

COUNCIL TO SELL OFF ALL SERVICES

Herefordshire Council will move to sell off all public services, making thousands redundant, in plans currently being discussed by top bosses.

Disgruntled senior staff have approached the Heckler to tell us about plans that would see services like schools, libraries and health and social care privatised across the county.

These plans, if implemented, would follow other councils across the country that have become so called 'cooperative councils'.

The idea, first mooted by Lambeth Council in London, is to sell services to voluntary organisations and private businesses. This privatisation of publicly funded bodies is seen as a solution to massive savings cuts ordered by the ConDem coalition.

But don't think for a minute this is just another part of the Tory class war. No, the majority of councils that have gone down this route are Labour run.

One department facing the chop is Herefordshire's youth services, currently under review by the same guy who recently closed many of Gloucestershire's youth centres. Their argument is that hardly anyone turns up to youth centres so why keep them open. But this has a lot to do with the way that government dictates that youth centres should be run as informal schools rather than social clubs.

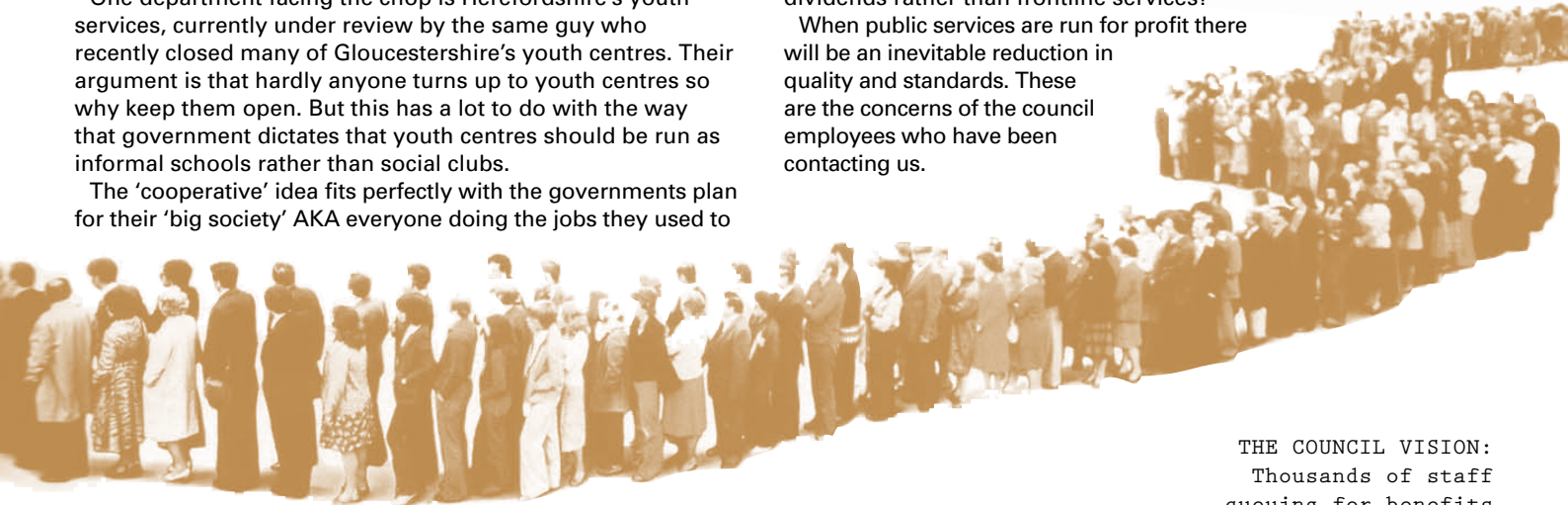
The 'cooperative' idea fits perfectly with the governments plan for their 'big society' AKA everyone doing the jobs they used to

do but without getting paid. The propaganda claims that local people will be able to take over the running of essential services and play a greater part in how their community is run.

Sounds great having a charity or social enterprise taking over public resources doesn't it? But what if the charity is a religious fundamentalist group like Freedom Church and they gain control of youth services? What about the involvement of private companies? Perhaps McDonalds would like to take over the running of school meals throughout the county!

It appears that nothing has been learned from previous privatisations. It won't be long before we see a couple of big wealthy organisations with the money to undercut everyone else buying up all the services. This always happens when you allow the market to control an industry. How do you feel about having a portion of your taxes used to pay for shareholder dividends rather than frontline services?

When public services are run for profit there will be an inevitable reduction in quality and standards. These are the concerns of the council employees who have been contacting us.



THE COUNCIL VISION:
Thousands of staff
queuing for benefits

BLOOD THIRSTY 'ANIMAL LOVER'



Lock up your councillors, **WE'RE BACK!**

Just when Herefordshire's rich and powerful had breathed a sigh of relief, convincing themselves we were finished, we return from the dimly-lit, underground meetings to declare... We're back!

Although in truth we never really went away. The Heckler is changing and over the past few months we've been taking a leisurely break to plan the next step; a desire to be something more than a four-page, bimonthly newsletter meant thinking about new formats, options and this was best without the pressures of a deadline.

So here we are, in our fifth year, launching a new website –

www.herefordheckler.co.uk

– which will see the publication move from a bimonthly printed newsletter to a more regular online magazine.

As well as the usual anarchist news and views from around the county, we will be expanding our sport coverage and introducing a new culture section, featuring film, music and Herefordshire life in general.

We also welcome a new batch of writers to the Heckler—some of the county's best and most influential—to add to our usual group of malcontents.

So expect to see the Heckler less often in print, but keep your eyes on the new website for regular updates, news and views from around the county.

Charlie Boy
(above left)
with otter,
taking a break
from the hare
murdering

Is Charles Pickles taking the piss or is he too stupid to see the irony?

An article recently appeared in both the Times and Journal that left us very confused. The article talked about the installation of a tunnel underneath the A438 at Swainshill. "Animal lover Charles Pickles," the article said, had heard of the plight of otters being killed on the road and had organised the building of the tunnel to "prevent further tragedies".

Yet, the previous week we were contacted by an employee of Hereford Futures. This is the rebranded Edgar Street Grid company that is busy planning the destruction of our beautiful city. The employee has had to endure many conversations with its executive board member, Charles Pickles, and felt that people should be made aware about Charlie Boy's extra curricular activities.

Far from being an animal lover, Charles Pickles is the Secretary of the Leaddon Vale Bassets. This group of vile individuals hunts hares around the Ledbury area in spite of the ban on hunting with dogs. Pickles used to be huntsman and master of the Shrivenham Foot Beagles who had an equally unpleasant attitude towards wildlife. This fanatical supporter of the repeal of the hunting act even has MFH (Master of Foxhounds) on the personalised number plate on his Chelsea Tractor.

So is Charlie boy taking us all for a bunch of fools or does he think saving otters excuses him for ripping other animals apart with dogs?

Workfare? Let's have a bit of **WARFARE!**

The ConDem government's 'workfare' scheme has come under fire in the last few weeks, with a national debate sparked by protests.

Mainstream media finally picked up the story after a small group of activists from the Right to Work campaign were forcibly removed from a Tesco store near the Houses of Parliament.

The scheme is part of a benefits overhaul by the government, with the apparent intention of 'getting people back to work'. The 'work experience scheme' sees jobseekers employed in unpaid, temporary positions in exchange for their benefits. Essentially it means that those on benefits are forced to work for free for a company or have their benefits stopped.

The website run by campaign group Boycott Workfare states: "Those who need welfare are forced into unpaid work for multi-million pound companies. Instead of a living wage, they receive only JSA—a tiny £53 a week for the under-25s—far below minimum wage. As a result of this, workfare means those in paid positions may see their jobs replaced by this unpaid labour. Why would a company pay for



people to do these jobs when they can get free labour from the Job Centre?"

Over a dozen high street companies, including Tesco, Argos and Superdrug, have now suspended their involvement in the scheme as a result of pressure from campaigners.

This issue is clearly something that we need to oppose. This isn't about opposing the ideologically driven programme of cuts by the government but about the basic rights of workers and the unemployed. It would seem that major companies continue to benefit at the expense of people who are unfortunate enough to join the growing number on the dole queue.

Targeted and organised protest actions, such as those seen in Tesco, can put pressure on companies involved in this exploitation. They can also raise people's attention by pushing this issue into the media, as we have already seen. To say we can defeat the cuts seems like a very unrealistic dream, but we can influence government and those companies involved in this case. We can stand up for the rights of workers and the unemployed and results are already being achieved.

Visit boycottworkfare.org

Eight laid-off at city printers

As we went to press we received news that Reprodex Printers had become the latest victim of the economic downturn and poor management, shutting down its presses for the last time on the 23rd February.

Printers of the Heckler for years, we were told how the boss gave eight staff no notice of redundancy, no wages for February and only five minutes to get their stuff together and go. She jetted off on a skiing holiday the next day.

Many thanks to Aldgate Press in London for getting us out of a hole.

YOU PAY £27M FOR NEW ROAD!

Hereford's old cattle market, before conversion into a car park

Herefordshire Council's budget has been slashed and job losses are being threatened left, right and centre.

Yet plans are being put in place to borrow £27 million to fund a highly controversial link road to Hereford's Edgar Street Grid.

The plans for a taxpayer-funded road are being drawn up after the council had been refused funding from both the public and private sectors.

Further developments with the ESG retail quarter reveal that a deal to receive the £80 million needed for the project to go ahead is yet to be done. Rents on the grid are being driven down as a dealbreaker, putting the site in direct competition with High Town.

Work to clear the old cattle market site is due to start at the beginning of March.

One group conspicuous by their absence in objecting to the plans is It's Our City. Once a powerful campaign group boasting the support of more than 13,000 people, its leading lights wound it up in favour of political group It's Our County, eager to get a taste of power for themselves.

A year later, and now with several councillors, It's Our County boasts little of the active, grassroots support it could do in its former incarnation, and little power to effectively challenge Herefordshire's supreme Tory council.

Whereas It's Our City could've whipped up a fury in protest at plans to borrow £27 million to fund a new ring road, opposed by most of Hereford's people, It's Our County can do little more than ask awkward questions of top council chiefs.

The Heckler has never been opposed to development on the cattle market site, but what we do object to is having our city and its heritage sold down the river to ruthless property speculators and greedy multinational companies looking for a quick buck.

Development on the site must genuinely benefit the people, but Tory politicians cannot be trusted to strike a deal that has the city's best interests at heart. Sadly, when It's Our County politicians killed of the grassroots movement against the ESG, they killed off any real hope of stopping the Tories in their tracks.

Herefordshire Council's talks with financial backers are ongoing.

CHILD POVERTY A 'SIGNIFICANT ISSUE' FOR HEREFORDSHIRE

More than 4,000 children and young people in the county are now categorised as living within the worst indicators of child poverty in the UK.

A report for Herefordshire Council labels child poverty as a "significant issue" and hopes its findings will help tackle the problem.

An area categorised as Golden Post-Newton Farm is the worst for overall deprivation and is also one of the UK's worst for unemployment.

Much of Hereford's South Wye area also has the highest level of young people not in education, employment or training.

Linking the child poverty problem with the ESG development, the Hereford Times commented: "It's hard, for instance, to see the promise of a new shopping centre when you are paid so far below the rate of inflation you can barely afford to buy.

"It's tough to hear talk of mass housebuilding when you're one of the 5,000 on a housing waiting list with little if any hope of ever entering the market.

"... There are two counties in Herefordshire – one a place defined by possibility and potential, the other the prospect of food on the table."

Urgent action is needed to eradicate poverty in the county, but we should be under no illusions that help will come from those in power.

Too often poverty is seen as an unfortunate situation people fall into

through their own poor management. Yet, what these grim times teach us is all that's needed is to be made redundant and even the well-off middle manager will soon slip into poverty.

In the here-and-now we must look to ourselves and each other to improve our own situation. Joining a union or banding together at work to fight for better wages and conditions is essential. Taking on slum landlords with neighbours to get repairs done at home is also important.

Many of these things involve nothing more than asserting rights we already have yet the results can make a real difference.

But in the long term we must fight to overthrow the cause of poverty: capitalism. This system cannot be reformed; we need revolution.

Battle of the supermarkets

THE FIGHTS SO FAR

Having seen off Tesco last year, campaigners in Ledbury also faced an application for a new Sainsbury's store.

'Ledbury Opposes out of Town Superstores' and 'Ledbury Supports Superstores' groups swung into action, both with strong support. But last month the battle came to an end.

Herefordshire Council's planning committee voting 12 to 6 against the plans. LOTS have claimed victory but LESS have vowed to continue the fight and support Sainsbury's if they appeal.

Over in Hay-on-Wye, Powys council revealed plans to sell the town's primary school, possibly paving the way for a new supermarket.

As part of the sale agreement, the developer would build a new school and community centre, which the council says offers an opportunity for new facilities to be provided without cost to the taxpayer.

It did not take long for fears of a new supermarket to surface.

Campaigning against the development, Plan B has held protests and public meetings.

Powys council recently announced that there would be a delay to any decision on a new supermarket until after the local elections in May.

To read this article in full visit www.herefordheckler.co.uk



HEREFORD UNITED SILENT ON HOMOPHOBIA

Fans disappointment with 'no comment'

Earlier this month the Football Association launched its Opening Doors and Joining In campaign. This is the FA's vain attempt to tackle homophobia in football. It's amazing that the dinosaurs running football are aware there's even a problem. Anyway, better late than never.

Luckily football fans themselves have been campaigning for some time to stamp out this vile problem. The Justin Campaign, named after Justin Fashanu, was founded in 2008. They campaign to end discrimination in football based on gender and sexuality. Their main initiative is the Football v Homophobia (FvH) campaign. This is an FA endorsed campaign, with the stated aim that: "we want football to take a clear stand against homophobia so that everyone can enjoy the beautiful game and so that football leads the way in removing discrimination and prejudice based on gender identity and sexual orientation."

How could any football fan disagree with that? Unfortunately though, very few football clubs have given their backing to the FvH campaign. At the time of writing only 20 league clubs have done so. We were disappointed to see that Hereford United isn't on the list.

Anyone who's read the Heckler will know we are proud supporters of United, so we felt we should contact the club about this issue. An email was sent asking the club to confirm their stance on this campaign and on the problem of homophobia in football. We are disappointed to tell you that we've had no response from Edgar Street.

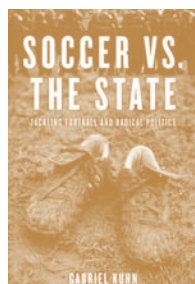
A contact close to the club informs us that they aren't answering emails at the moment. That may be so, but the club must have a policy toward discrimination and as fans, we'd like to know what it is.

Most people are happy with the work being done by the Chairman David Keyte; so come on David surely this subject is important enough for you to issue a statement? Until you do, your silence is deafening.

www.footballvhomophobia.com / www.thejustincampaign.com

'SOCCER VS. THE STATE: TACKLING FOOTBALL AND RADICAL POLITICS'

by Gabriel Kuhn



Football. It's something that we are very passionate about. At any radical political gathering you will almost always find football being talked about by some, and avoided like the plague by others.

Within anarchist movements opinion is divided over the 'beautiful game'. Some see it as a 'counter revolutionary' distraction from the struggle against capitalism. By others, the pitch or the terraces are seen as a legitimate arena to let our hair down, forget about work and have a laugh. Some even see football as a possible force for change, bringing people together and encompassing the most essential of our beliefs: solidarity, collective endeavour and individual creativity.

In 'Soccer vs. the State' activist, author and one-time semi-pro footballer, Gabriel Kuhn, pulls together interviews, leaflets and pictures, along with his own analysis to discuss these interventions in football culture.

Kuhn goes into some detail with the radical debates surrounding modern football, covering the politics and some of the less appealing sides of the game; the trends of nationalism, bigotry and violence, commercialisation and its use, abuse and control by the powerful, including some notable dictators throughout history.

Grassroots fan initiatives—such as Football Club United of Manchester and Bristol's Easton Cowboys & Cowgirls Sports and Social Club, boasting many international tours and over half a dozen football teams—also get a lengthy review.

'Soccer vs. the State' is an informative and thought provoking read that could be easily read by those with or without in-depth knowledge of football. It is essential reading for the football fan with an interest in politics. Highly recommended.

HEREFORDSHIRE YOUTH REVIEW— A CORRECTION

Published on the homepage of its website, Herefordshire Council had wrongly reported: "We are undertaking a review of the way youth work and outdoor education opportunities are provided in the county and we would like your opinions".

We have been informed a number of errors were made in this statement and after running it through our spellchecker we can report that it should've read: "We will be making all youth workers redundant". Apologies all round.

NO ONE GIVES A FLYING FUNK ABOUT THE DIAMOND JUBILEE—*OFFICIAL*



Mayor of Ledbury, Allen Conway, faced an almost empty hall when a public meeting was called to discuss Mrs Windsor's diamond jubilee.

Only seven people could be bothered to turn up and at least four of those were councillors. "I put 50 chairs out tonight and I didn't need to do that," said a very bitter Conway.

One of the loons that did turn up proposed a £1 tax on all Ledbury residents to raise around £10,000. Good luck with that, mate.

This followed Education Secretary Michael Gove's proposal to buy Mrs Windsor a £60m yacht for her little knees-up; another idea that went down like a lead balloon.

Let's face it, no one gives a shish kebab about the jubilee, we're just looking forward to an extra day off.

This month's Heckler challenge: BORROW A HORSE FROM THE POLICE

This one's fairly simple by all accounts. Approach your friendly neighbourhood police station and ask to borrow one of their horses. Your request should be granted and you should be free to ride around to your heart's content at the expense of the police. If unsuccessful, please return with Rebekah Brooks who will be sure to sort you out.